

Home Circle.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

The custom of giving presents by means of the Christmas tree originated in Germany and north of Europe, where the anniversary of the Savior's birth was celebrated with many quaint observances.

For a long time it was customary for the Christmas tree and its accompanying gifts to be brought to the children by a certain Knecht Rupert, a character who still flourishes in some villages in North Germany. Knecht Rupert was, in his attire, the very embodiment of winter. He wore a white robe, high buskins, a white beard and eyebrows, and an enormous wig. Usually he had two attendants, also masked and disguised, who helped him to carry the numerous toys.

His visit was made between candle-light and bedtime, and when he threw open the front door of a German cottage on a snowy and frosty night, and entered with the Christmas tree rising above his shoulders, hung with lanterns and presents, he was overpowering personage indeed.

At first the children were frightened by his appearance and the wild attire of the helpers. This feeling soon gave place to one of anxiety, however, caused by the questions he put to the parents concerning their behavior during the year; finally they were transported with joy by the lovely things which Knecht Rupert handed around.

Gradually the Christmas tree was introduced throughout Germany, Sweden and Denmark, then into England and France. At length it made its appearance in the United States, where it was adopted as the tree of Santa Claus.

LINCOLN'S HESITANCY TO MARRY.

Letters from Lincoln to his closest friend, Joshua Fry Speed, subsequent to the latter's marriage, betray an anxious and impatient desire to learn if marriage is a pathway of flowers and sunlight, and not of darkness and pain the two had morbidly feared it to be. John Gllmer Speed presents these hitherto unpublished letters bearing upon "Lincoln's Hesitancy to Marry," in the October Ladies' Home Journal. In one, Lincoln says;

"It cannot be told how it now thrills me with joy to hear you say you are 'far happier than you ever expected to be.' That much I know is enough. I know you too well to suppose your expectations were not, at least sometimes, extravagant, and if the reality exceeds them all, I say, enough, dear Lord. I am not going beyond the truth when I tell you that the short space it took me to read your last

letter gave me more pleasure than the sum total of all I have enjoyed since the fatal first of January, 1841. Since then, it seems to me, I should have been entirely happy but for the never-absent idea that there is one (referring to Miss Mary Todd) who is still unhappy, whom I have contributed to make so. That still kills my soul. I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing to be happy while she is otherwise. She accompanied a large party in the railroad cars to Jacksonville last Monday, and on her return spoke so that I heard of it of having enjoyed the trip exceedingly. God be praised for that. One thing I can tell you which I know you will be glad to hear, and that is that I have seen Mary and scrutinized her feelings as well as I could, and am fully convinced she is far happier now than she has been for the last fifteen months past."

Eight months after Speed had married, Mr. Lincoln wrote him:

"But I want to ask a close question: 'Are you now in feeling as well as judgment glad that you are married as you are?' From anybody but me this would be an impudent question not to be tolerated; but I know you will pardon it in me. Please answer it quickly, as I am impatient to know."

Mr. Lincoln's object in asking this "close question" is manifest. Mr. Speed gave the answer quickly and satisfactorily, and on the fourth of November (1842) one month exactly after the question had been submitted. Mr. Lincoln was married.

DIXIE'S SIX CENTS.

A short time ago a pale-faced little girl walked hurriedly into a bookstore, and said to the man serving at the counter, "Please, sir, I want a book that's got 'Suffer little children to come unto me' in it; and how much is it, sir? and I'm in a great hurry."

The shopman bent down and dusted his specks.

"Suppose I haven't the book you want, what then, my dear?"

"O sir, I shall be so sorry; I want it so!" And the little voice trembled at the chance of a disappointment.

The kind shopman took the thin hand of his small customer in his own.

Will you be so very sad without the book?"

"Well, sir, you see I went to school one Sunday when Mrs. West, who takes care of me, was away; and the teacher read about a good Shepherd who said those words, and about a beautiful place where he takes care of his children, and I want to go there. I'm so tired of being where

there's nobody to care for a little girl like me, only Mrs. West, who says I'd better be dead than alive."

"But why are you in such a hurry?"

"My cough's getting so bad now, sir, and I want to know all about him before I die. It'd be so strange to see him and not know him. Besides, if Mrs. West knew I was here, she'd take away the six cents I've saved running messages to buy the book with; so I'm in a hurry to get served."

The bookseller wiped his glasses vigorously this time, and lifting a book off the shelf he said, "I'll find the words you want, my little girl; come and listen."

Then he read the words of the loving Savior, Luke 18:16 (get your Bibles and find the place, children,) and told her how this good Shepherd had a home, all light, and rest, and love, prepared for those who love and serve him.

"Oh, how lovely!" was the half breathless exclamation of the eager little buyer; "and he says, 'Come.' I'll go to him. How long do you think it may be, sir, before I see him?"

"Not long, perhaps," said the shopkeeper, turning away his head. "You shall keep the six cents, and come here every day, while I read some more out of this book."

Thanking him, the small child hurried away. To-morrow came, and another morrow, and many days passed, but the little girl never came to hear about Jesus again.

One day a loud-voiced, untidy woman ran into the shop, saying, "Dixie's dead! She died rambling about some good Shepherd, and she said you was to have these six cents for the mission box at school. As I don't like to keep dead men's money, here it is." And she ran out of the shop.

The cents went into the box, and when the story of Dixie was told, so many followed her example with their cents that at the end of the year "Dixie's cents," as they were called, were found to be sufficient to send out a missionary to China to bring stranger sheep to the good Shepherd.—*Episcopal Record*.

THE SABBATH.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" is written not only in the decalogue, but also in man's nature. Sir Robert Peel once said he never knew a man to escape failure either in mind or in body who worked seven days in a week. The Sabbath was made for man. Its observance is a duty we owe to ourselves as well as to God. A rest day is essential to man's best development and highest good, and he who neglects the injunction to keep the day holy neglects his own best interests.